

INSIDE
EUROPE
TODAY

JOHN GUNTHER

INSIDE
EUROPE
TODAY

In Advance—Installment X
Book-of-the-Month Choice for August

Why K Wrecked Summit

By John Gunther

KHRUSHCHEV THE ACTOR

I have attended a good many press conferences in my time, some of them remarkable, but never one like that at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, on Wednesday afternoon, May 18, 1960, when Nikita Sergeivitch Khrushchev tore open a grave for the Summit Conference, buried it, and, during two hours and forty-two minutes of outraged frenzy, spat venomously on the remains. Nobody among the three thousand or more journalists and officials who were present is ever likely to forget the experience, probably the most astounding one-man performance ever seen on a political stage—sordid, hair-raising, and unutterably bizarre.

Khrushchev rose to speak, and, as almost everybody will remember, was truculent, scornful, cocksure, diabolically clever, and, as usual, full of his own peculiar brand of peasant earthiness.

Khrushchev had worked strenuously for a Summit for years, and wanted it desperately. Why, then, did he do what he did in Paris? Why did he torpedo the Summit, and by so doing murder his own dream?

Hundreds of thousands of words have been written about this, and the whole subject still calls forth blistering controversy. But, though there are interlocking factors, the main reason is simple enough. Given the background, Khrushchev's behavior was not so irrational as it may have seemed to be. Mr. K. wrecked the Summit because of the U-2 affair.

The U-2 Films
Caused K's Rage

After the Powers flight Mr. K. had a corpus delicti—the proof, the goods. Moreover, although the Russians had been aware of the overflights, they did not know what their results were until the Powers films were developed. Appar-

2. China probably played a role. Immediately after his return from Washington Khrushchev had proceeded to Peking, where Mao Tse-tung is supposed to have received him with marked coolness. The Chinese leader even spoke of "certain people" who had been "misled into trusting Eisenhower."

3. Nobody to this day knows precisely what happened in regard to Berlin at Camp David. Eisenhower, a nice man, wanted to be nice, and, almost beyond doubt, Khrushchev interpreted either the sense or the mood of what he said as indicating that the West might be prepared to make large concessions on Berlin.

4. "The secret of Russian fury, Russian indignation over the U-2 is Soviet fear of war." I heard this remark in London shortly after the Summit breakdown. Its author was one of the wisest and most discerning Russians I know—not a Communist—and it tells much. Russia has always been extraordinarily sensitive to anything that touches on its sacred soil. One could go into examples from time immemorial.

Khrushchev's Act

Approved For Release 1999/09/16 : CIA-RD
In New York Mr. K. was

rious Lavrenti P. Beria, the boss of the secret police.

Khrushchev himself was not, in the first instance, a member of this triumvirate. Malenkov became both Prime Minister and head of the party, as Stalin had been, on March 9. He held this double post for only eight days, however. Then, in circumstances which have never been satisfactorily explained, he decided to give up the party secretaryship but to remain Prime Minister. Malenkov must have known that the first of these positions held vastly more power than the second; therefore the supposition is that he was forced to divide his functions. By whom? We do not know. But we do know that it was Khrushchev who replaced him in the party post, and a few months later, Mr. K. was formally installed as First Secretary of the CPSU, which job he still holds, and which is the most powerful in the Soviet Union. All of Khrushchev's subsequent career derives from this.

Three Jaguars
Turn on Beria

Malenkov, as Prime Minister, was much weakened. The triumvirate was now a quadrumvirate. But soon Malenkov, Molotov and Khrushchev turned like jaguars on Beria; he was arrested, condemned to death, and shot on Christmas Eve, 1953.

This ended the era of outright police rule, and the way was now open for the rubbery Khrushchev (one of his nicknames in Moscow is the "Football"), with his unparalleled powers of maneuver and political sense, to consolidate his own position. Malenkov was deposed, as

they have ever been before. Third, he symbolizes termination of the terror, release from the depravities of Stalin's police. Fourth, he stands for peace, which every Russian wants. Fifth, he personifies vividly the standing and extraordinary singleness of purpose of the Soviet regime.

What Khrushchev hates most is NATO and the American overseas bases, because these confront him with the possibility of retaliation in the event of war. What he fears most, basic American strength aside, is West German rearmament. What he wants most, next to Soviet advance, is disarmament. What annoys him most is Berlin, with the UN Secretariat a close second.

© 1961, by John Gunther

(The material published in this and succeeding articles is excerpted from John Gunther's forthcoming book, "Inside Europe Today," to be published by Random House & Brothers.)

TOMORROW: Secret Concession and Red China

